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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS, MAY, 1916

Looking back over the past twelve months, there are no notable events to record, no big achievements, no great good fortune, but still I feel the year as a whole has been full of encouragement and that we stand today on a surer footing than we ever have before, and with bigger, broader vistas opening before us.

Through a systematic campaign conducted during the past five months our membership has been increased by about 1,000 new individual members. One-third of these have become active rather than associate members and thus have manifested a very genuine interest in the Federation's work as well as sympathy in its aims. Membership means strength—widened influence, increased means. And whereas the response to invitations to membership has not been as great as might have been desired, still it has been sufficient to show that in time through such effort a membership running high into the thousands may certainly be secured. Such a membership solves our financial problem and at the same time assures the accomplishment of the purposes for which the Federation was formed tangibly testifying to an increase of appreciation of art.

At the same time that our individual membership has been increased our chapter membership has been enlarged. The Federation has now 223 chapters scattered throughout the United States, including every Art Museum in this country and one in Canada.

In the last twelve months the demand for exhibitions has increased. Some of the places to which we sent collections in earlier years have got so well on their feet that they have arranged for their own exhibitions this year, but in their stead have come many more reaching out toward us for help in this direction. From towns in North and South Dakota, Montana and Idaho more than twenty requests came last winter for exhibitions, not all of which could we supply. As it was, we sent out and had in circulation during the greater part of the season twenty-eight exhibitions which were shown in no less than 141 places.

These exhibitions comprised as usual oil paintings, watercolors, etchings, lithographs, sculpture, photographs, arts and crafts objects, miniatures, etc., collections often secured through the cooperation of a chapter made up of professional artists, and carefully selected with the purposes of exhibition in view.

I shall not go into details, for such would be endless, but I would have you know what a vast amount of interest these exhibitions have aroused and how much pleasure they have given while serving as factors in a general scheme of education. One of the collections of oil paintings went to Oklahoma and was shown at Norman in the State University. Advance notices were sent in the form of handbills all over the state and when the exhibition opened the railroads combined in giving special rates to those who desired to visit it. The result was an exceedingly large attendance, not alone by those residing in Norman, but from all parts of Oklahoma, and a very keen interest. A voting contest was instituted and the pictures were studied assiduously. It is interesting to find that in this new state formed from the old Indian Territory, the picture which proved most popular was a painting of an Indian by Irving Couse. This picture, "Making Pottery," was later purchased for a Texas collection.

Sioux Falls, N. D., took two of our exhibitions this year, having had one last year, and counted both successful from the standpoint of interest and attendance, although when the first was on view the thermometer ranged from 20 to 25 degrees below zero.

Three of our exhibitions have been shown in great State Fairs, one in Texas, one in Minnesota, the other in Iowa. These have each been very largely attended.

Five collections have journeyed to the Pacific Coast, one has gone as usual to Texas, others have passed from city to city, or town to town, in the middle west and east.

A very choice group of paintings chiefly lent by private collectors has made under the Federation a circuit of Universities in the middle west and through this channel has reached thousands of the coming citizens who will determine to what extent

art shall be esteemed in America in the future.

The sales made from our exhibitions this year have been more numerous than last, but do not aggregate so much, as they have for the most part been works of smaller cost. But this is not discouraging, for it is not the limited class of great wealth we are endeavoring to reach, but rather those in larger numbers whose means are ample but not so extensive.

The sending out of these exhibitions is without doubt one of the most interesting and useful branches of our work.

Another means of educating those who desire knowledge is the circulation of illustrated lectures on art, and in this field I believe the work being done by the Federation is unique. We have now twenty such lectures written by authoritative lecturers and specially adapted for general audiences. These have been in constant demand and seem to have given much satisfaction. They have been given in all 112 times.

In addition to sending out these lectures to places where for the most part authoritative lecturers could not be secured, the Federation has upon many occasions furnished the names of available lecturers on art to those making inquiry, and it would be well if arrangements could be made at some future time to send out such lecturers on prearranged tours under the auspices of the Federation.

Midway of the year the name of our magazine was changed from "Art and Progress" to "THE AMERICAN MAGAZINE OF ART." The change was thought expedient for several reasons, chief among which was the belief that under the latter title the publication would become more closely associated with the Federation and be more fully recognized as its official organ. It was also thought that as THE AMERICAN MAGAZINE OF ART the scope would be widened and the publication expanded. Some have expressed a preference for the old title and regret the change, but quite as many have approved the change and certainly no ill results have been noted. To the contrary, the circulation of the magazine has steadily increased, so our regular editions are now 5,000 and of some issues no copies are left. Furthermore, we have been fortunate in adding to our

list of contributing editors and publication committee an advisory board composed of the foremost artists in this country—and the readiness of the response given to requests for such assistance and service was gratifying indeed.

The policy of the magazine remains the same. It is not a magazine for connoisseurs, but for the general reader—upholding high standards, we hope, but relating art to life, and, despite the changed name, going to show that art is and has been a factor in progress in as much as it is a measure of civilization.

As the official publication of the Federation, it is the organ of each of the Federation's chapters, and should so be recognized and used. Some of the chapters seem fully conscious of this fact but not all, and we would lay special stress upon this point at this time.

The XIIth volume of the American Art Annual has been issued during the past season. This volume, which came from the press in January, contains not only the directory of art organizations, lists of sales of paintings, etc., but also the "Who's Who" among artists. Copies were sent to all the active members of the Federation, as heretofore, and in addition to several hundred subscribers. The edition was the largest yet issued. This volume was gotten out under the direct supervision of Miss Florence N. Levy, who originated the publication. Upon its issuance Miss Levy resigned her managing editorship and the business of publication was transferred to the Washington office. Miss Levy will, however, act as editor of subsequent issues and Volume XIII, which is already in preparation, will be issued as usual at the close of the present calendar year. The Federation is most fortunate in having thus secured a continuance of Miss Levy's services which are given under the present conditions gratuitously.

Upon two occasions during the past year the American Federation of Arts has been called upon for service of a rather extraordinary character. Almost as soon as the convention was over last year, our attention was called to the fact that through a somewhat ambiguous wording of the Cummings amendment regulating the shipment of certain merchandise it appeared to be il-

legal to ship paintings or other works of art by express without giving their full value and paying charges based upon such declaration which were prohibitively high. For a time it looked as though transient exhibitions had come to an end until the amendment could be amended. The situation was trying in the extreme and it came upon us suddenly—exhibitions that were supposed to be traveling became stationary—it was difficult to know how to even get them home. From all sides letters of inquiry were received. Conferences were held with representatives of the Interstate Commerce Commission, the express companies and the insurance agents with the result that an agreement was finally reached which obviated the embarrassment and overcame the most serious difficulties. This was a case where the advantage of having headquarters here in Washington was shown and the use of the Federation as a general clearing house manifested.

The second occasion was of a somewhat different character and so far less happy in its termination. It was discovered that the United States Government was about to authorize the erection of a central heating and power plant on the Potomac River front, adjacent to the park system, against the recommendation of the Federal Commission of Fine Arts and of such design that the beauty of the National Capital would be permanently impaired. The American Federation of Arts immediately sent letters of protest to Congress and issued a statement to all of its chapters asking for immediate action upholding the judgment of the Commission of Fine Arts and urging reconsideration of both site and plan. An editorial was published in *THE AMERICAN MAGAZINE OF ART* and other efforts successfully made to secure the cooperation of the leading newspapers and of prominent individuals. The response which came was immediate and hearty. Hundreds of letters of protest were written, telegrams were sent and a widespread interest in the preservation of the beauty of Washington was manifested. In this work the American Federation of Arts cooperated with and had the hearty cooperation of the American Institute of Architects and the local organizations, among which most active may be named the Committee of One

Hundred on the Development of Washington. Up to the present time the campaign seems not to have been successful, although work on the objectionable building with its towering smokestacks has been suspended, but whether this monstrosity is erected to be removed at some future day or not—some good has come of the protests if only through an awakening of interest and a better comprehension of the present density of ignorance against which educational efforts should be directed. A country which does not recognize the value of expert advice, that does not officially appreciate the value of beauty, that esteems art merely in accordance with its marketable price and regards it largely as a humbug, is perilously near degeneration or that barbarity which is inherent in all.

But there are hopeful signs which may be put over against these distressing signals. The state of Virginia has during the past year, largely through the influence of the American Federation of Arts and the efforts of broad visioned statesmen, created a state art commission composed of experts.

More and more the American Federation of Arts is serving as a clearing house for art organizations and as a general bureau of information. Some of the inquiries which come to our desk are curious enough, but many are serious and all give indication of a desire for knowledge. It is an enormous field and one in which the worker is assured large reward. The program for the present convention in itself gives some idea of its breadth and of the problems with which we are today confronted.

In conclusion there is just one thing I should like to emphasize and that is the national character of our organization. The American Federation of Arts does today represent the art interest of this country through its chapters and its individual members. It is not, furthermore, an organization independently formed and conducted, but an aggregation of organizations—the sum of its chapters. If it is to do the great work which it may do it must have the loyal support of its several units—it must not be thought of as something apart, but as the central office. It must be both local and national—for it can never be truly the one until it is fully the other.

LEILA MECHLIN.